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above remarkable circumstances, on the appearance of the ghost of Alonzo the Brave ; he informs us,

“ The dogs as they eyed him drew back
in affright ;
“ The lights in the chamber burned
blue.”

White, according to our legends, is very predominant in the costume of ghosts ; yet some, like the ghost in *Hamlet*, are said to have appeared in the colours of their usual apparel ; be this as it may, it is likely they have an aversion to black, though I confess I think it would be a very becoming colour for ghosts ; yet only one is noticed adopting it, and that one in the beautiful old ballad of William and Margaret, wherein the dress of the ghost is thus described :—

“ And clay-cold was her lily hand,
“ That held her sable shroud.”

Some roads and places are still somewhat famous for the appearance of spirits, especially those near ruins or plantings, from which we may conclude they are fond of shelter. I remember a by-road near the place in which I lived in infancy, that was well studded with venerable trees on each side, which many good people were timorous to enter, after sunset, several persons having related that they had seen in this place, a black man, driving a fiery chariot, drawn by four black horses ! What rendered this story still more surprising, and certainly more solemn, it was asserted by some, and pretty generally believed, that this charioteer appeared sometimes without his head ! in which state we may suppose he cut rather a singular appearance. I have not been able to learn whether he spoke without his head or not !!!

Strange and incredible as it may

appear, numerous persons, calling themselves rational beings, believed such nonsense as matters of fact, within these fifty years ; for such stuff then formed a larger portion of country fire-side information than at present ; old women, and those of the same standard of knowledge, often passing the dreary winter nights in relating terrific fables of ghosts, witches, and murders, which often go hand in hand. I remember, when a boy, being highly delighted with such relations, though they always made me afraid to go to bed, or enter a place that was dark. Sometimes after those tales of terror, I have been so timid as to refrain looking about, lest I should behold some horrid spectre ; and even yet, in spite of scepticism, I am rather afraid to remain in a room without light, which I ascribe to the numerous hobgoblin stories I heard in infancy.

At present many persons are beginning to see the impropriety of telling such stories to children, or permitting grannums to frighten them with boggle-boo's ; we may therefore conclude that the time is not distant when *Robin Redy, Stumpy*, and numerous others of the same corps, will be rarely heard of, even in the fabulous registers of old women.

ALEXIS.

Woodburn.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF THE UTILITY OF INSTRUCTION ; BY A COMPETENT WITNESS, AND ONE WELL VERSED IN THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRIMES OF MANKIND.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Ford, Ordinary of Newgate, to Basil Montagu, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

WITH regard to your question, "What are the causes of the commitment of so many crimes?" I answer, (with all due deference to wiser heads), that an aversion from labour impels some to plunder, with the hope of artfully obtaining from others that maintenance for which they are unwilling to exert their own industry. 2. Others are inclined to work, but cannot obtain employment; the imperious calls of nature, therefore, necessarily as it were, stimulate those who are groaning under those calls, to prey upon the public. 3. A depraved disposition coerces others to plunder, not caring what fate may befall them. 4. Wicked parents, and vicious companions drive the young and the unthinking into the perpetration of crimes of various descriptions. 5. But the chief cause of the committing of crimes is to be ascribed, in my humble opinion, to the want of *early instruction in reading*; consequently, a total ignorance of religion, as well as of every moral principle. Indeed, the lower orders are by habit so far familiarized with the Divine being as to *swear* by him; but they neither *believe* in him, nor *pray* to him: and why? because they have not been made acquainted with him in their *youth*; nor have they enjoyed the greatest of all *blessings*, as well as *comforts*, of being instructed in his holy word. You cannot expect these people to *practise* what they do not *know*. Let the poor be but educated, and I will venture to assert, that in the course of thirty years, at most, there will not be one fourth of the crimes which are now committed. About seven or eight years back, going into the desk, at the chapel at Newgate, on the first Sunday after the preceding sessions, I saw twelve men in the condemned felons' pew, who, from

the respectable appearance of their dress, and the ease of their deportment, seemed to have been proper characters to be introduced into the very best company. When I announced the day of the month, and mentioned the psalm, I was very much astonished to observe that not one of these convicts took up a prayer-book, (though there were several lying before them,) neither did any of the party seem to know a single particle of the church service, or when they were to sit, or stand, or kneel. The ensuing day I attended them in the condemned room, when, after some conversation suitable to their forlorn situation, the following dialogue took place.

Ordinary.—I take it for granted you are all dissenters?

A Prisoner.—Oh dear, sir, no; I believe we are all churchmen.

Ordinary.—How did it happen, then, that none of you opened a prayer-book yesterday, during divine service? Upon this there was rather an appearance of confusion, and a dead silence. I put the question a second time, and one of them hesitatingly stammered out, "Sir, I cannot read;" "Nor I, nor I, nor I," was rapidly uttered *by them all*.

Ordinary.—How is it, then, that calling yourselves churchmen, you seemed so ignorant of the customs of the church, as not to answer one of the common responses?

A Prisoner.—Sir, I have not been in the habit of going to church; for, as I was never taught to read, I did not choose to go there to *expose* my ignorance. So said several others: and some said, their parents never went.

Ordinary.—As you have not been in the habit of going to church, and none of you can read, how came you to say that you were churchmen? What is the meaning of the word churchman?

A Prisoner.—I really do not know, sir; but this I am sure of, that I am not catholic, nor one of my family.

Ordinary.—Were you ever taught the catechism?

A Prisoner.—I never heard of it in my life.

At this very time, I have thirteen capital male convicts under my care, twelve of whom are churchmen like those whom I last mentioned; and not more than four of them can read; the *thirteenth* is an Irish catholic, and is not acquainted with a single letter.*

If my memory served, I could quote hundreds of instances of similar ignorance amongst criminals. Can it be expected, then, that such poor untaught creatures can be sensible of the immorality of their conduct? Certainly not. I am positive the *rising* generation cannot be made more guilty than the *present*, by learning to read; and therefore I am for the experiment being made; but whether by Dr. Bell's or by Mr. Lancaster's method, seems to me of small consequence. Do but teach them to read, and instruct them in the *principles of religion*, and leave the event to the Almighty.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

The following singular instance is extracted from Sir W. Meredith's Speech in the House of Common's, many years ago, as quoted in Montague's Opinions, Vol. 2. page 393, 400.

“WHEN a member of Parliament brings in a new hanging-law, he begins with mentioning

* Much has been said by way of reproach as to the deficiency in school-learning in the Irish. Here we have instances that education is greatly neglected in England—Imperial, assuming England! K.

some injury that may be done to private property, for which a man is not yet liable to be hanged; and then proposes the gallows as the specific and infallible means of cure and prevention. But the bill, in progress of time, make crimes capital, that scarcely deserve whipping. For instance, the shop lifting act was to prevent bankers, and silversmiths, and other shops where there are commonly goods of great value, from being robbed: but it goes so far, as to make it death to lift any thing off a counter with intent to steal. Under this act, one Mary Jones was executed, whose case I shall just mention. It was at the time when press-warrants were issued, on the alarm about Falkland's Islands. The woman's husband was pressed, their goods were seized for some debt of his, and she, with two small children, turned into the streets a begging. It is a circumstance not to be forgotten, that she was very young, (under nineteen,) and most remarkably handsome. She went to a linendraper's shop, took some coarse linen off the counter, and slipped it under her cloak; the shopman saw her, and she laid it down: for this she was hanged. Her defence was, (I have the trial in my pocket,) ‘that she had lived in credit, and wanted for nothing, till a press-gang came and stole her husband from her; but since then, she had no bed to lie on; nothing to give her children to eat; and they were almost naked: and perhaps she might have done something wrong, for she hardly knew what she did.’ The parish officers testified the truth of this story; but it seems there had been a good deal of shop-lifting about Ludgate, an example was thought necessary, and this woman was hanged—for the comfort and satisfaction of some shopkeepers in Ludgate-street.